

The Quiet You Bring

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The Quiet You Bring

by [stellaspectral](#)

Summary

You think Leo is out of your league. But after overhearing something he wasn't supposed to, he makes it his new mission to close the distance between you, one small gesture at a time.

Notes

This story is based on [this post](#).

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

The sound of the lair is something you've grown to love.

You can pick out the humming of Donnie's servers from his lab, the clatter of Mikey in the kitchen attempting some culinary monstrosity, and the rhythmic thuds from Raph's room where he's pulverizing his punching bag.

It's the sound of home.

You're on the couch, with April sitting beside you, scrolling through her phone as she does some research for a news report she's working on. You, on the other hand, are supposed to be drawing. But your pencil has been still for the better part of ten minutes. Your gaze, as it so often does when you're here, has drifted and snagged on a single point of focus.

Leo's near the entrance to the dojo. He's performing a series of kata, his twin katanas a blur of silver. He moves with a lethal grace that seems utterly incongruous with someone of his size and bulk. The light catches the intricate patterns on his skin, intense concentration etched onto his face.

He's now practicing a move that could disarm a dozen armed men. Yesterday, your biggest challenge was navigating a self-checkout machine that kept insisting there was an 'unexpected item in the bagging area.' A sigh, soft and wistful, escapes you before you can stop it. It's quiet, but April catches it.

"Staring at your boyfriend again?" she teases, her eyes still glued to her phone, the corner of her mouth twitching upwards.

Heat floods your face, a mortifyingly swift blush you know is turning you the color of a ripe tomato.

You snap your head back down to your sketchbook, your pencil suddenly feeling clumsy in your now sweaty hand. "He's not my boyfriend, April," you mumble, the words sticking to your tongue. You shade a section of your drawing with far more vigor than necessary, nearly tearing the paper.

"Could be," she says, finally looking over at you. A knowing, slightly exasperated smirk plays on her lips. "You just have to, you know, actually *talk* to him. Form complete sentences. Make eye contact for more than two-point-five seconds."

"I talk to him!" you protest, your voice squeaking on the last word. And you do. You're the queen of monosyllabic communication. You say "Hi," and "Thanks," and occasionally, a daring "Good night." Landmark conversations, every single one of them.

April just raises an eyebrow. "Honey, I've seen you have deeper conversations with your houseplants. Seriously, what's the hold-up? He's a good guy."

You risk a glance back at him. He's finishing his forms, sheathing his swords. For a moment, he bows his head as he regulates his breathing. He's the leader. The responsible one. The one

who carries the weight of his entire family on his shoulders. He's noble and serious and so devastatingly handsome in a way that makes your stomach do frantic little flips.

"That's the problem," you confess to April, your voice thick with a hopeless sort of admiration. "He's not just a 'good guy.' He's ... *Leo*. He fights aliens and robot-samurai and saves the city on, like, a biweekly basis. He's a hero."

You look down at your own hands, at the smudges of graphite on your fingertips and the chipped polish on your nails. You think of your small apartment, your part-time job at the library, your perfectly normal life that was so completely and irrevocably upended the day you stumbled into April's world—and, by extension, the turtles'.

"And what am I?" The words tumble out now, a torrent of insecurity you can no longer contain. "I'm just ... me. Ordering coffee makes me nervous. I trip over my own feet on flat surfaces. He's ... he's so completely out of my league it's not even funny. We're not even playing the same sport. He's in the Super Bowl and I'm in the stands, spilling soda all over my lap."

April gives you a sympathetic look. "I don't think he sees it that way."

"How could he not?" you sigh, finally closing your sketchbook. "It's just a fact."

You don't notice the change in the room. You don't see the way Leo, who had finished his cooldown and turned to head towards the kitchen for a bottle of water, had frozen mid-step. You don't see the way his shoulders tense, and his eyes widen just a fraction. Because he *heard*.

Every self-deprecating word.

He remains perfectly still—listening until April changes the subject and the two of you are deep into another conversation. Only then does he finally move, a troubled expression on his face as he heads back to his room.

The next few days are ... strange.

The change in Leo is almost imperceptible at first, so subtle you're convinced you're just projecting your own ridiculous hopes onto him.

When you all gather to watch a movie, he doesn't take his usual spot in the armchair. Tonight, he bypasses it completely and settles on the couch. Not right next to you—that would probably make your heart combust on the spot—but close. Close enough that his arm is only a few inches from yours where it rests on the back of the couch.

Your body is ramrod straight, your popcorn forgotten, your entire being focused on not accidentally brushing your hand against his. And so, you spend the entire two-hour runtime of the cheesy sci-fi flick acutely, painfully aware of his proximity.

A few nights later, the strangeness escalates. During dinner, while Mikey is proudly presenting his latest masterpiece, Leo speaks. Directly to you.

“Did you finish that book you were reading?” he asks. His voice is a low, pleasant rumble.

You jump, nearly dropping your slice of pizza. A week ago, you mentioned the book off-handedly to Donnie. You’re floored that Leo not only heard but actually retained that information.

“Uh, y-yeah,” you stammer, your eyes darting down to your plate. “It was ... it was great.”

“What was it about?” he presses, his tone genuinely curious.

Your mind goes completely blank. You can’t remember the plot, the characters, or even the title of the book you’ve spent the last few days completely engrossed in. All you can think is, *Leo is talking to me. Don’t say something stupid. Don’t say something stupid!*

“Space,” you finally squeak out. “And, um ... feelings.”

Raph snorts from across the table. “Sounds deep.”

Leo shoots his brother a glare that could melt steel before turning his attention back to you, his expression softening. “It sounds interesting,” he says, and he sounds like he means it.

Mikey wiggles his eyebrows at you. Donnie simply pushes his glasses up his nose, a flicker of something curious in his eyes as he observes the interaction.

The small, focused interactions continue to pile up.

He asks your opinion on a strategic problem he’s mapping out, valuing your “outside perspective.” He makes a point of saving you a cup of the good tea Master Splinter keeps for special occasions. You even receive a compliment on one of your sketches, with him telling you that you have a way of “seeing the beauty in ordinary things.”

The invitation to the dojo was the most terrifying, though.

“I need a spotter,” he’d said, his voice even.

You stand awkwardly near the door as he goes to the center of the mat and moves into a one-handed handstand. The sheer power required is breathtaking. He has muscles of corded steel, and his entire body presents a study in focus.

“You see?” he grunts, his voice tight with effort. “Tell me if my alignment shifts.”

You have no idea what proper handstand alignment looks like, but you nod anyway, your mouth dry. “You’re ... you’re good. Very ... straight.”

A low chuckle escapes him, causing him to wobble for a second. “Eloquent as always.” He isn’t mocking you; his tone was warm, amused. He holds the pose for another ten seconds

before landing silently on his feet. “Thanks. It helps to have someone watching.” He gives you a small smile that makes your knees weak.

Each small gesture is a fresh wave of confusion.

Your shy, insecure heart can’t process it. A part of you—a hopeful, fluttering part—thinks that maybe April was right. But the much louder, more dominant part of your brain—the part that has been in charge for most of your life—screams that this is all an elaborate act of pity. He overheard your pathetic little confession and now he feels sorry for you.

He’s just being nice, trying to make the timid little human girl feel included. The thought is so mortifying it makes you want to crawl into a hole and never come out.

The breaking point comes a week after your conversation with April. You’re in the kitchen, trying to wash your dinner plate. Sometimes, you swear the faucet has the pressure of a fire hose. You’ve sprayed a fine mist of water all over the front of your shirt. Frustrated and embarrassed, you let out a huff of annoyance.

“Need a hand?”

You spin around, your heart leaping into your throat. Leo is standing in the doorway, leaning against the frame with a casual ease that you find utterly captivating.

“N-no! I’m fine,” you stammer, turning back to the sink and scrubbing at your plate with unnecessary force. “Just ... wrestling the faucet. It’s winning.”

He chuckles. He pushes off the doorframe and walks towards you. The kitchen suddenly feels claustrophobic. He reaches around you, his body a solid wall at your back, his large hand easily gripping the nozzle. With a simple twist, the water pressure evens out to a gentle, manageable stream.

“It sticks sometimes,” he says, his voice soft and impossibly close to your ear. “You have to know the trick to it.”

You are frozen solid. Your entire being is focused on the scant inches between your back and his plastron. You can smell the clean, freshly washed scent of his skin, of whatever body wash he uses. It’s intoxicating and completely overwhelming. Your brain has officially short-circuited.

“Thanks,” you whisper, rinsing your plate in record time and practically launching it into the drying rack.

You need to flee. Now.

You turn to squeeze past him, your eyes to the floor. “I should, uh ... I have to go.”

“Wait.”

His voice is gentle, but it stops you in your tracks. Reluctantly, you lift your head. He’s looking down at you, his blue eyes searching your face. There’s no pity in them. There’s

something else, something you can't quite decipher. It looks like ... frustration? And something softer.

"Are you avoiding me?" he asks, his voice quiet.

Your throat closes up. "What? No! Why would I—I'm not." Your denial is weak and unconvincing even to your own ears.

A sigh escapes him. "I heard you," he says, his gaze unwavering, pinning you in place. "That night. On the couch. I heard what you said to April."

Oh.

Oh, no.

The floor beneath you might as well have given way. Every ounce of blood and color drains from your face, leaving you cold and clammy. You want to run, to scream, to teleport back to your apartment and never show your face here again. You squeeze your eyes shut, bracing for the inevitable letdown.

"You think I'm out of your league," he states.

You can only manage a tiny, jerky nod, your eyes still closed. You can't bear to look at him.

"Look at me," he says, his voice still soft, but with an undercurrent of command you can't ignore.

Hesitantly, you open your eyes. He hasn't moved. He's still standing there, looking at you with an intensity that steals the very breath from your lungs.

"You're wrong," he says simply, bluntly.

Your brow furrows in confusion. "What?"

"You're wrong," he repeats, a little more forcefully this time. "You have it completely backward." He steps closer, forcing you to crane your neck to maintain eye contact. "You see this?" He gestures to himself. "You see a hero. A leader. You know what I see when I look in the mirror? I see the mistakes I've made, the times I've put my family in danger, the pressure of trying to be what everyone needs me to be."

His voice drops lower, becoming more vulnerable than you've ever heard it. "My brothers ... they're my entire world. But they look at me and see the Leader. Raph sees a rival to challenge. Donnie sees a strategist to consult. Mikey sees the fun-police who needs to lighten up. Splinter looks at me and sees the dutiful son, the one who must uphold his honor. They all *need* something from me constantly."

He pauses, his eyes boring into yours. "But you," he says, his voice softening again, "when you look at me ... I don't know. It's different." A small, fond smile touches his lips for a fleeting second. "You look at me like I'm just *Leo*. When you're here, you bring this ... quiet

with you. A sense of peace.” He takes a deep, shuddering breath, as if steeling himself for an ice-cold plunge.

“You think I’m out of *your* league? Do you have any idea how terrifying it is to talk to you? I’m trained to face down adversaries. I’m not trained for ... this.” He gestures vaguely between the two of you. “I spend ten minutes trying to work up the courage to ask you about a book, and my heart is pounding harder than when I was facing down Shredder. You think I’m some perfect, noble hero? You make me so nervous I can barely think straight.”

You stare at him, your mouth slightly agape, your mind reeling. Your carefully constructed reality—the one where you are the insignificant, star-struck human and he is the unattainable, heroic mutant—is shattering into a million pieces. He’s nervous? Around *you*?

“You—you’re serious?” you breathe.

“I’ve never been more serious in my life,” he says, his gaze fierce and true. “The reason I started talking to you more wasn’t pity. It was because I heard you say you thought you weren’t good enough, and it was the most fundamentally incorrect thing I had ever heard. I wanted to prove you wrong. I wanted to show you that I see you. The real you. The one who has the gentlest, most peaceful soul I’ve ever had the honor of knowing.”

Tears prick at the corners of your eyes. But also tears of disbelief, of overwhelming, heart-swelling relief.

“I ... I like you, Leo,” you say, the confession finally, *finally* breaking free. “I like you so much it physically hurts sometimes.”

A slow, breathtaking smile spreads across his face—and it’s the most beautiful thing you have ever seen. “Good,” he rumbles, the sound full of its own relief. “Because I really, really like you, too.”

He lifts a hand, his large palm moving with incredible slowness, as if giving you every chance to pull away. He gently, reverently cups your cheek, his thumb stroking over your skin. You lean into his touch instinctively, your eyes fluttering shut as you savor the contact.

“So,” he murmurs, “just to be perfectly clear ... we’re in the same league?”

You open your eyes, a watery laugh bubbling up from your chest. “Yeah, Leo,” you whisper, your hand coming up to rest on his wrist, feeling the powerful tendons beneath his skin.

“We’re in the same league.”

“Good,” he says again, and then he closes the small distance between you.

His kiss is nothing like you could have imagined in your wildest, most vivid daydreams. It’s not fierce or demanding, or clumsy. It’s tentative, and gentle, and so unbelievably sweet it makes you dizzy. You melt into it, all your fear and insecurity and self-doubt dissolving, replaced by a radiant, soaring happiness that feels bright enough to light up the whole lair.

When he pulls back, he rests his forehead against yours. You stay like that for a long, perfect moment, just breathing each other in. It's just the two of you, in your own quiet universe.

From the doorway, a loud voice breaks the spell.

“FINALLY!”

You both jump apart, your faces flushing. Mikey is standing there, a grin stretching from ear to ear, giving you two enthusiastic thumbs-up. Peering over his shoulder is Donnie, who adjusts his glasses and offers a satisfied smile. And leaning against the far wall, arms crossed over his chest, is Raph. He rolls his eyes dramatically, but you can't miss the ghost of a genuine smirk playing on his lips.

“Took you long enough,” he says, before shaking his head and heading back towards the dojo.

Leo groans, hiding his face in his hand for a second in embarrassment. But when he looks back at you, he's smiling. He takes your hand, his fingers lacing through your smaller ones, a perfect, comfortable fit.

“Sorry about them,” he says, his thumb stroking the back of your hand. “They have no concept of privacy.”

“It's okay,” you reply, your own smile so wide it makes your cheeks ache. “They're your family.”

“Welcome to the family then,” he says.

He leads you back to the couch, sitting down so close your knees touch. There's a movie playing, but neither of you is watching.

“So,” he says, turning to face you fully. “Now that we've established we're in the same league ...” He looks down at your joined hands, a contemplative look on his face. Then he looks back up at you, his eyes full of a warmth and affection that makes you feel like the most cherished person in the world. “Would you be interested in seeing a game? With me? Not in the stands, though. Maybe a private box?”

“A private box?” you laugh.

“Yeah,” he says, his gaze soft. “My favorite rooftop, a couple of pizzas, and no brothers allowed. How's that for a first date?”

You lean your head on his shoulder. “Sounds perfect.”

End Notes

Kudos and comments welcomed 😊

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